Chapter 1: The New Testament Church Is Born

1. The Background of the Church
    a. *When the New Testament Church was founded, this promise was fulfilled (Galatians 5:8) by the extension of the Gospel to the Gentiles*
    b. *Our Christian faith, therefore, has its ancestry in the Hebrew religion. Jesus is the Messiah who is the fulfillment of the promises made to the Old Testament people.*
2. The Nature of the Church
    a. *Jesus Christ distinctly indicated the spiritual nature of this new institution; He sent them out to preach a salvation by faith in His name*
    b. *this new Church was to be a spiritual entity – one founded and directed by the Holy Ghost*
3. The Physical Preparation for the Church
    a. *"When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son." (Galatians 4:4)*
    b. *This great Empire prepared the physical scene for the spread of the Gospel. It gave peace in place of constant tribal warfare; it built a great network of roads and bridges that made travel possible all over the then-known world; it cleared the sea of pirates so that trade by sea and travel by ship became common practice; it protected its citizens from robbers and rioting.*
4. The Spiritual Preparation for the Church
    a. *intellectual climate was also readied for their work. Greece had spread her culture throughout the Near East and had "conquered" Rome with her civilization.*
    b. *Greek philosophy had made many people doubt their gods whose strange activities now began to fade into myth and legend.*
    c. *the Empire continued to encourage religion only because such belief served to curtail revolt among the common people. The Roman state religion was clearly a political affair that offered no peace of mind to a disturbed soul. All this left a moral vacuum that boded no good for the world.*
5. The Expansion of the Church
    a. *Many factors caused the Church to be extended. Direct revelation to Peter indicated that Gentiles also were to be included in the Church. The stoning of Stephen and the persecutions by Saul and others scattered the early Christians. Jews of the Dispersion, who had witnessed the events of Pentecost, carried the message of salvation when they returned to their homes.*
    b. *Official missionaries, such as Paul, brought the Gospel to many pagan communities. Unofficial missionaries, the early converts, were themselves enthusiastic witnesses.*
6. The Character of the Church
    a. *In the beginning the Church of Jerusalem was known for its spiritual beauty. The members were united by a spirit of love. This was shown in their sharing of material goods and their concern for the welfare of fellow members. They "were of one heart and of one soul."*
    b. *The young Church was also marred by corruption and dissension. Selfish interest became a stumbling block. Factions, lawsuits, abuses of the Lord's Supper, and other problems faced the Apostolic Church. The Jewish and Gentile Christians often found it very difficult to extend the hand of Christian brotherhood.*
    c. *In spite of human shortcomings, the Church is the body of Jesus Christ. For it God prepared the world; for it Christ gave Himself; for it the apostles labored and suffered.*
    d. *Now, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, the stone cut from the mountain (Daniel 2:55) was about to fill the earth.*